The A. F. of L. Weekly News Letter contains a brief summary of important matters affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative, and judicial fields, and such other information as shall benefit the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

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AGITATE ! EDUCATE ! ORGANIZE !

VOL. 9. NO. 40. WASHINGTON, D. C., SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1919. WHOLE NO. 456.

LET RAILROAD CONTROL BE GIVEN FAIR TEST

Washington, Dec. 27.—In a letter signed by President Gompers, railroad brotherhoods and farmers' organizations' executives, a plea for support was asked to favor an extension of governmental operation of the railroads for two years. The letter is as follows:

"Proponents of the Cummins bill for the immediate return of the railroads with a high guaranteed compensation are attempting to justify this bill by asserting that it is your duty to return the railroads to their owners by January 1, 1920, and that some legislation providing for such return must be enacted immediately.

"We believe that this assertion is a great injustice to you. As you will doubtless know, an overwhelming majority of the farmers, of the membership of the American Federation of Labor, of the railway brotherhoods, as well as the general public, favor the extension of the period of government operation of the railroads for at least two years, in order that a fair test may have been made of government operation and a plan may be worked out for the ultimate disposal of the railroads which would be fair and just to all interests involved. Such recommendation was made by Mr. McAdoo when director general of the railroads, who urged a five-year extension of government operation, and the members of the interstate commerce commission have also urged extension.

"Director General Hines and members of the interstate commerce commission have shown conclusively the return of the railroads will involve an increase in the annual revenue of close to a billion dollars, the rates being increased 25 to 50 per cent. This increase in rates, according to these same authorities, will be sufficient to meet the annual cost of living of at least $4,000,000,000 to $5,000,000,000 demanded. The American people cannot and should not stand such increase.

"Government operation, as reported by Director General Hines, showed a net profit at the rate of $600,000,000 a year for the three months prior to the coal strike.

"The senate is now being asked to investigate serious charges against certain officials of railroads during the period of federal control, that they had committed sabotage and had wilfully and purposely attempted through unfair methods while presumably serving the government, to discredit government operation.

"We respectfully request, Mr. President, on behalf of the farmers, the American Federation of Labor and the railroad brotherhoods, and on behalf of the general public, that you stop the current that you plan to return the railroads to private control, and that in view of the changed conditions and the pressing industrial unrest and to establish public confidence by advocating that the period of government operation be continued for at least two years, so that under peace conditions there may be a fair, impartial and more consistent trial of government operation, and that such plan be considered plans for the ultimate disposal of the railroads may be worked out and adopted."

FOOD COSTS INCREASE.

Washington, Dec. 27.—Reports to the United States bureau of labor statistics from retail dealers in 51 cities show that the retail cost of 22 staple articles increased 4 per cent in November, as compared with October.

The average family expenditure for these 22 articles increased 5 per cent from November, 1918, to November, 1919.

For the six-year period, November, 1913, to November, 1919, the increase was 84 per cent. The following articles increased more than 100 per cent: Rice, 104 per cent; bread, 104 per cent; potatoes, 105 per cent; corn meal, 116 per cent; flour, 124 per cent; lard, 129 per cent and sugar, 138 per cent.

Based on the average price for the year 1913 as 100, the retail price index number for the 22 articles of food, combined, for the United States, was 188 for October and 193 for November, a percentage increase of 2 per cent, which makes the cost the same as it was in August, the previous high water mark during the six-year period.

HIGH COSTS AFFECT BABES.

Washington, Dec. 27.—Investigations by the children's bureau of the department of labor show that babies have died as a result of the advance in milk prices. In Baltimore 7 children under 5 years and 7 years of age only 29 per cent are now having fresh milk, as against 55 per cent one year ago. In Washington one-half of these between 5 and 7 years—only 50 per cent are now having fresh milk, as against 85